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ABSTRACT

This guide to coping with street gangs is aimed at the young person who may be considering gang membership or who is afraid of gang violence. Understanding gangs leads to the ability to cope with the problems they pose. Part I explores "What Gangs Are," explaining characteristics of gangs and why young people join them. It is essential that adolescents understand that despite the killings and other violence, gang members bond with each other, some considering the gang a substitute for the family they lack. Others join because they feel a need to fit in and because a gang can strengthen a member's sense of group identity. Part 2 discusses coping with gangs, suggesting some things one can do to be safe. The following are considered: (1) coping with one's own emotions; (2) poverty; (3) broken families; (4) neighborhood problems; (5) the need to belong; (6) gangs themselves; (7) threats and violence at school; (8) drugs and dealers; (9) violence on the streets; (10) dealing with death; (11) family members who are gang members; (12) leaving the gang; and (13) the Guardian Angels as a possible solution. An appendix lists resources and places to get help, as well as 30 books and articles for additional reading. (SLD)

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